(d) National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) has reported that it has initiated various steps to improve the performance of the cooperative banks. These include, asking these cooperative banks to prepare Development Action Plans (DAPs), execution of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between Co-operative Banks, NABARD and the concerned State Government, conducting organizational development intervention programmes for cooperative banks for improving their organizational performance, providing assistance outs of Cooperative Development Fund for improving the operational efficiency of cooperative banks, encouraging banks to organize farmers clubs and providing financial assistance for launching and maintaining such clubs, providing support in the areas of human resources development, instituting awards at national level for excellence in the performance of cooperative banks, etc.

Revision of Excise and Customs structure

1977. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are any proposals with Government to revise Excise and Customs structure;

(b) what are the salient features of the reforms; and

(c) by when they will be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government has approved the restructuring of Customs and Central Excise Department.

(b) The aim of the restructuring exercise is to create a Tax Administration which is officer oriented, technology driven, and assessee friendly. It also provides for closer supervision by creation of smaller and compact Commissionerates and Zones. The other objectives of restructuring are to reinforce the Directorates of Anti-Evasion and Revenue Intelligence for countering tax evasion and smuggling and unblocking the revenue locked in Appellate cases. To fulfil these objectives, an additional 144 posts of Commissioner level, *viz.*, 31 for Central Excise, 07 for Customs, and 106 for Appeals/Adjudication and Directorates, have been created.

(c) This scheme has been introduced with effect from 1st November, 2002.

Increase in expenditure

†1978. DR. PRABHA THAKUR:
SHRI BALKAVI BAIRAGI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in Dainik Jagran dated 21st August, 2002 captioned, "Bharhana tha Rajasva kar aur badh gaya kharch";

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that the Department has raised a battalian of officers for lowering the income tax related disputes and recovering the irrecoverable revenue and has increased its burden of salary but the locked up amount has gone up to ten thousand crore rupees;

(c) if so, the details in this regard; and

(d) what steps are taken/proposed to be taken up by Government for improving this situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Restructuring of the Income Tax Department was done after a long time in F.Y. 2001-02 and among other measures, the number of posts for Commissioners (Appeals) was increased with a view to expedite disposal of a large number of Appeals filed before Commissioners (Appeals). The Restructuring of the Department has not resulted in any additional expenditure on Salary and Allowances rather a saving of Rs. 3.05 crores is expected to be made on this account in the short-run. Despite increase in the number of posts at the Commissioner level, Restructuring has on the whole resulted in the down sizing of the Department by 4.75% as a number of posts at the lower levels have been surrendered.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.